

CHAPTER 6

VILLAGE CENTER

The Village Center is a thirty-seven (37) block mixed-use area containing a range of retail, service, office, institutional, and residential uses, as shown on Figure 6, Village Center Master Plan. It is located adjacent to Route 14 (Northwest Highway) on the north and east, and is bounded by the EJ&E railroad tracks on the west, and Lake Street on the south. Route 59 (Hough Street) runs through the Village Center.

The Village Center's commercial core runs north and south along Hough Street as well as east and west along Main Street. Two-story buildings and small shops along these arteries and on Cook Street have established a small town heritage "Main Street" character for the area. A portion of the Village Center is located within the National Register Historic District.

The Village Center should create an environment which encourages social interaction from which grows the sense of community, the building of an identity that spurs group actions which further define the community. The Village Center must satisfy functional needs, but also raise daily human activity to a level of human interaction. The Village Center will have succeeded in serving its role in the community when it is not just a place to function, but truly a place for people to enjoy the benefits of civic life. The development of a community center, which would facilitate and encourage social interaction among the community itself as well as surrounding communities, should be strongly encouraged.

The Village Center contains a variety of functions, including retail operations such as specialty and gift shops, a major supermarket, and a multitude of apparel, jewelry, home furnishings stores and restaurants. Automobile dealers and services stations continue to thrive in the Village Center and have become a destination for shoppers. Although there are several nationally known retailers, the small town character is well balanced by the large number of local businesses. A wide range of personal service businesses compliments the retail functions in offering the opportunity for the face to face exchange of goods and services.

The Village Center combines a diversity of elements and activity generators, which serve as community anchors. The Village Hall, Catlow Theater, Barrington Area Historical Society, Chamber of Commerce and Barrington Arts Council help to reinforce the identity of the Village Center. To balance the mix of uses, office space is available and encouraged, from a few hundred square feet in older historic buildings to large blocks of contemporary office space in new or completely renovated structures. Office uses generate daytime activity, which supports the retail base. This use should be developed as part of mixed-use developments on underutilized sites. Second floor use should be encouraged.

The central location of the train station provides many area residents the convenience of a commuter rail link to Chicago's Loop, as well as housing opportunities within walking distance. As an activity generator, the Village should create pedestrian linkages to the central business core and residential neighborhoods.

Retail establishments in the downtown primarily serve the convenience shopping needs of residents from the BACOG area. The demand for major comparison goods is more frequently satisfied at one of the regional shopping malls located within ten miles of the Village Center. With the trend for retailers to locate closer to their customers, the Village Center can provide the opportunity to attract more comparison goods retailers.

In order to fulfill the Village objective of increased tax revenue, additional development opportunities should be encouraged, particularly the expansion of commercial/retail floor area. This effort will support the established land use pattern and protect the Village from competing strip shopping centers and regional malls created or proposed adjacent to the Village boundaries, which could potentially erode the strength of the Village Center.

In an effort to protect the commercial base of the Village Center, four areas have been identified as having potential for development: (1) The triangle area (Special Planning Area 1), bordered by Hough Street on the east, the C&NW railroad to the south, the EJ&E railroad to the west; (2) The South Cook Street area (Special Planning Area 2), bordered by Hough Street on the west, Park Avenue to the north, Summit Street to the east, and Lake Street to the south; (3) The North Cook Street area (Special Planning Area 3), principally occupied by the Motor Werks facility; and (4) The North Hough Street Business District (Special Planning Area 29), bounded on the east by Hough Street, to the south by the EJ&E railroad, Langendorf Park to the west and Lions Office Building to the north. The four redevelopment areas mentioned above have been designated as Business Districts under Illinois Revised Statutes, Chapter 24, Division 74.3 for redevelopment purposes. The Village adopted Ordinance 92-2416 on November 9, 1992 establishing said business districts, as shown on Figure 10. Downtown Business District Plan.

The Village Center boundary expansion is limited by abutting quality residential and institutional uses. The redevelopment of vacant and under-utilized parcels as well as adaptive reuse of older structures provides an opportunity to meet future needs within the Village Center. The intensity of development is limited by the importance of maintaining the pedestrian scale and small town character of the Village Center. This requires new construction or redevelopment projects to contextually fit within the surrounding architectural scale of the area.

Village Center Master Plan

The Village Board of Trustees has adopted the “Village Center Master Plan”. This Plan was created in order to facilitate the revitalization of the Village Center through the enhancement of the streetscape design and development opportunities. The Plan divides the Village Center into four (4) quadrants by Hough Street and Main Street, which run north-south and east-west, respectfully, through the Village Center. These areas consist of the Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast quadrants. This document (1999 Comprehensive Plan) acknowledges and accepts those recommendations established within the Village Center Master Plan and incorporates them fully in this chapter.

Northwest Quadrant

A plan for Redevelopment Area No. one (1) (Special Planning Area 1) should be implemented. The plan should focus on the placement of retail buildings along Hough Street, with residential and/or office use above. The plan should also identify shared parking areas, stormwater detention, a village green, new street connections, and architectural elements consistent with the Village Center.

Consideration should be given for a pedestrian crossing of the Metra railroad tracks which connects the Ice House Mall and Jewel-Osco with Redevelopment Area No. one (1) as well as the installation of a transfer platform if the EJ&E becomes a commuter rail line.

The Barrington Area Historical Society’s development “Old Barrington Center” should be encouraged and maintained with distinctive signage and gardens. The adjacent area should also be enhanced with additional parking, fencing and landscaping improvements.

A landscaped Village Center gateway along Main Street, west of the EJ&E railroad tracks and on the southwest corner of Hough Street and Route 14 should be implemented.

Northeast Quadrant

Parking lot improvements to the lot at the southeast corner of Hough Street and the EJ&E railroad tracks should be considered as well as the construction of a two-level parking garage with above ground-level retail at the northeast corner of Cook and Chestnut Streets. This facility would be shared by area businesses for employee and shopper parking.

The installation of two new traffic signals should be considered at Hough and Liberty Street and Main and Cook Street.

A landscaped Village Center gateway at the southeast corner of Hough Street and Route 14, and the northwest corner of Main Street and Route 14 should be implemented.

Southwest Quadrant

Consideration should be given to the redevelopment of the property located at the southwest corner of Hough and Main Streets. This site should be redeveloped as a retail commercial building and shall be positioned toward the intersection with parking located behind and/or to the side of the building.

The extension of Applebee Street south of Main Street to Station Street should be considered. This would cause the need to implement diagonal parking and access restrictions for the adjacent businesses. Diagonal parking should also be considered along the north side of Station Street, west of Hough Street.

A landscaped Village Center gateway on Main Street, west of the EJ&E railroad tracks, and on the northwest corner of Hough and Lake Streets should be implemented.

Southeast Quadrant

A plan for Redevelopment Area No. two (2) (Special Planning Area 2) should be implemented. The plan should focus on creating a mixed-use development for the entire block, except for the buildings along Main Street. Retail shall be allowed at the ground level and office or residential above. An underground parking deck should also be considered for incorporation into this development. As an alternate to the mixed-use development, one-story retail development of the south and west sides of the block should be encouraged. However, if the buildings are three stories, then the third story should be stepped back from the street fronts.

This plan shall encourage the adaptive reuse of the existing bank building and facade, and limit curb cuts on Station and Cook Streets to internal parking and service areas only while allowing a shared service drive within the block. Provided the entrance is not realigned to Station or Cook Streets, a decorative architectural arch over the service alley entrance on Hough Street should be encouraged.

This plan shall also encourage a small pedestrian plaza at the northwest corner of Station and Cook Streets, wider sidewalks along Hough, Station, and Cook Streets, and diagonal parking spaces along Cook Street.

The redevelopment of the northeast corner of Cook and Lake Streets with a new one or two-story retail building should be considered as well as the redevelopment of the southwest corner of Station Street and Grove Avenue with a two-level, employee and shopper parking deck. The first level would be below grade with access from Cook and Station Streets. The second level would be at grade with the Harris Bank building with access from Grove Avenue. Redevelopment of the southwest corner of Main Street and Route 14 with one or two new retail buildings and shared parking should be considered to enhance the eastern gateway to the Village Center.

Consideration should be given to the long-range opportunities of using the Metra commuter parking lots on the north side of the railroad tracks for a mixed-use retail and residential development with commuter parking.

A landscaped Village Center gateway at the northeast corner of Hough and Lake Streets, and the southwest corner of Main Street and Route 14 should be implemented.

Access and Circulation

Illinois Route 59 is the primary north-south artery, which travels through the center of the Village of Barrington. The Illinois Department of Transportation (I.D.O.T.) has classified Illinois Route 59 a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA) and has recently completed a study which indicates the need for roadway widening to five (5) lanes with improved turn lanes at all intersections. The Village is strongly opposed to widening Route 59 through the downtown because of the tremendous negative impact it would have on the historic district, adjacent neighborhoods, the Village Center and the established infrastructure. The Illinois Department of Transportation has therefore cited an additional option in their SRA study, which is an Illinois Route 59 bypass that requires the development of a feasibility study.

A Route 59 bypass would improve traffic flow through the Village Center. It would reduce cut through traffic in many residential neighborhoods, reclaim the business district from a parking and pedestrian standpoint, and re-route undesirable truck traffic. It is anticipated that any bypass option evaluated would include grade separations at all

railroads. The grade separations provide more effective public safety response and allow for safe pedestrian passage under the tracks.

Design Guidelines

The enhancement of the streetscape is an integral component of a comprehensive effort to maximize the development potential of the Village Center as well as its quality of life benefit to community residents. Making the Village Center an attractive and inviting place to be is part of the overall strategy for improving the area, and streetscape improvements are an essential element of making the Village Center attractive.

The ability of the Village Center to attract and enhance human activity is directly related to the quality of the streetscape. The streetscape is composed of all of those elements and characteristics which define the public right-of-way, including buildings, trees, paving, signs, etc. The objective of the streetscape design is to create a harmonious and strongly attractive pedestrian environment. It is recommended that any improvements to the streetscape conform to the design guidelines of the Village Center Master Plan.

The wrought iron fencing elements and landscaping should be introduced to screen the view of parking areas. Appropriate signage must conform to the design standards in the Village Center Master Plan.

Similarly, utilitarian elements, such as dumpsters, should be screened from view along the public right-of-way by landscaping, walls or fences, which relate to the adjacent building surfaces in scale, color and material. Decorative streetlights will be installed using double acorn decorative standards on the primary streets (Hough and Main Streets) and single light fixtures on secondary streets.

Removal of utility and overhead obstructions, wherever feasible, should be initiated as part of a streetscape improvement program.

Facade Improvements

The older buildings in the Village Center, particularly in the original core area (southeast quadrant) account for much of the charm and identity of Barrington. The scale, architectural styling and details add a richness and personality to the streetscape. Some of the older buildings, however, are in need of corrective and preventive maintenance. Others have lost some of their character due to inconsistent efforts to modernize them. Regardless of adaptive reuse of older structures or new development, the following general guidelines for improvements should be considered in the review process.

1. The street level should be open and inviting with attractive, up-to-date and uncluttered window displays. Doors and storefronts should have large glass areas, be appropriately proportioned to the architecture of the building and have attractive lighting.
2. The integrity of wall materials should be maintained. Synthetic materials, which lack durability, compatibility with the architecture of the building, or the texture of original materials should not be allowed. Masonry should not be painted or sandblasted but rather cleaned with non-destructive techniques. Previously painted masonry could be painted where this is necessary to preserve the structural integrity of the masonry surface.
3. Signage should be carefully controlled, particularly in the retail core. Signs should be used for identification, not advertisement. They should be scaled for readability by pedestrians. They should be placed within the frieze of the building as individual letters or within a background wooden frame; on the fascia or canopies or valance of awnings; or on the upper portion of large windows. Temporary signs should be kept to an absolute minimum. Second floor tenants should have pedestrian-scaled signs adjacent to the first floor entry door. No signage should be approved above second story windowsills.
4. Style and cadence of windows should not be changed. Filling in window or door openings with solid materials is inappropriate to the style of the building; it could be employed but should be proportioned

to fit over the opening. Openings that must be closed for functional reasons could be covered by shutters or opaque glass, which would maintain the integrity of the opening.

5. Properly proportioned and maintained awnings and canopies provide shelter from the elements and help to define the pedestrian space. They shield window displays from the negative effects of the sun and can contribute to the continuity of the shopping experience along multiple building facades. Proportions from awnings and canopies should be appropriate to the architecture of the building and materials should resist fire, fading and wear.
6. Colors should be limited in number and intensity and enhance the architectural character of the building.
7. Heating, ventilating and air conditioning units (HVAC) on rooftops should not be visible from public rights-of-way. Existing units should be landscaped or screened by solid continuous wooden fence painted or stained to minimize the visual appearance of these units. HVAC units at ground level should be landscaped or screened, as should dumpsters and other utilitarian elements. Wherever possible, telephone, utility and other lines should be consolidated and should be brought in underground or from the rear of the building in the least conspicuous manner. Transformers, utility panels and other such utilitarian elements should be painted to blend into the wall or background of the building of which they are a part. Parking areas should be screened as noted under streetscape design and paved pedestrian areas and landscaping should be introduced to soften the visual impact of the paved area.
8. Rear entries should be screened, landscaped and maintained to encourage people to enter directly from rear parking lots. Subdued signage, doors with large open glass area, pedestrian scale lighting and other design techniques should be used to enhance these alternative entries to commercial properties.

Tax Increment Redevelopment Project

On February 28, 2000, the Village of Barrington Board of Trustees passed ordinances to designate an area within the Village Center as a Tax Increment Financing Redevelopment Project Area. This project area commenced in February 2000 and will end in February 2023. The Project and Plan has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Illinois Compiled Statutes, Chapter 65, Act 4, Section 11-74.4-1, et. seq. as amended.

The Tax Increment Redevelopment Project is intended to guide improvement and activities within the designated project area in order to stimulate private investment. The goal of the Village, through the implementation of this Redevelopment Plan, is that the entire project area be revitalized on a comprehensive and planned basis in order to ensure that private investment in rehabilitation and new development occurs in the following manner:

1. On a coordinated rather than piecemeal basis to ensure that the land use, access and circulation, parking, public services and urban design systems are functionally integrated and meet present-day principals and standards, and
2. On a reasonable, comprehensive and integrated basis to ensure that conservation area factors and the presence of blight are prevented or eliminated, and
3. Within a reasonable and defined time period so that the area may contribute productively to the economic vitality of the Village.

The EJ & E Railroad bound this Redevelopment Project Area on the west, Station Street, Lake Street and Main Street on the south, Northwest Highway, Cook Street, and North Avenue on the east, and Main Street, Franklin Street, Washington Street, Liberty Street, and the EJ & E Railroad on the north (see Figure 11, Tax Increment Financing Redevelopment Project Area Boundaries).